

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
2101 NASA Parkway
Houston, Texas 77058-3696



January 14, 2009

Reply to Attn of: AL-09-010

TO: Distribution

FROM: AL/Chief Counsel

SUBJECT: Widely Attended Gathering Determination Regarding Attendance of
NASA Employees at the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
(BAHEP) Quasar Award Banquet

On January 16, 2009, the 2009 BAHEP Quasar Award Banquet will be held at the South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center. The event will recognize Mr. Michael Coats, Center Director, NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC), where he will be recognized as the BAHEP Quasar Award recipient. The Quasar Award is given annually to an individual who has contributed greatly to the economic wealth and diversity of the Bay Area. It has been determined to be in the best interest of the Government for those NASA employees who are invited to this event to attend in their official capacities as representatives of NASA.

BAHEP helps to create a regional development context within which the public, private, and community sectors can work together to provide direction for positive change; to improve the quality of life and social well-being; strengthen the economic infrastructure and facilitate the recruitment, retention, and creation of jobs; guide future development and encourage wise use of the environment; support the cultural and civic life of the region; and provide an agenda for concerted community action.

NASA JSC has been and will continue to be a strong influence in the aerospace community of the Houston Bay Area, and as a member of BAHEP, NASA JSC develops invaluable relationships with members of the community. NASA JSC has partnered with BAHEP under a Space Act Agreement to participate and support various community and education outreach activities. Through this relationship, NASA JSC is able to widely disseminate information to the members of BAHEP and to the entire community about the NASA mission, vision, goals, and statutory obligations.

BAHEP will sponsor a banquet dinner in honor of Mr. Coats. The event will be a widely attended gathering of approximately 600 people, which includes representatives of NASA, academia, elected officials, dignitaries, aerospace, and other various industries in and around the Houston Bay Area. Individual meals to the banquet are valued at \$22.00

per person, and includes the cost of all food and beverages, according to Bob Mitchell, President of BAHEP.

This event will allow NASA employees the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual interest regarding the economic development of the Houston Bay Area, science, education, and the existing partnership between NASA and BAHEP. I find that these events meet the requirements of a "widely attended gathering" as defined in 5 C.F.R. §2635.204(g). Consequently, I conclude that NASA's interest in its employees attending this event outweighs any concern that free attendance may, or may appear to, improperly influence any NASA personnel in the performance of their official duties.

Therefore, NASA invitees may attend this event at no charge and accept any food or refreshments that may be offered.



Bernard J. Roan

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